

VZCZCXRO6588

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RUEHLN RUEHLZ RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHSQ #0748/01 2561405
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 131405Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY SKOPJE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6515
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE 0031
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2130

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000748

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DEPT FOR EUR/SCE, G, AND DRL/SEA
STATE PLEASE PASS TO NSC/DEMOC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [MK](#)

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: INPUT FOR PRESIDENT'S HUMAN RIGHTS
ROUNDTABLE AT UNGA

REF: STATE 125456

POST'S ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS

[1](#)1. (U) USG efforts in Macedonia to protect and promote human rights focus on strengthening rule of law, decreasing political influence on and corruption in the security forces and judiciary, and capacity building to strengthen democratic institutions and civil society.

[1](#)2. (U) Embassy officials, including the Ambassador and other senior staff, regularly meet with the Ombudsman and NGOs working to protect and promote human rights and democracy. The Office of the Ombudsman has a mandate to protect citizens' rights, fight discrimination, and improve equitable representation for all ethnic communities. The Office of the Ombudsman, with strong U.S. and EU support, has been steadily increasing its capacity to protect citizen's rights. Numerous NGOs operating in Macedonia work to protect and promote human rights and democracy, including the Helsinki Committee, local NGOs focused on the protection of ethnic minority rights, and a number of NGOs promoting transparency in government and efforts to combat corruption.

USG-FUNDED PROJECTS WITH NGOS AND GOM PARTNERS

[1](#)3. (U) Post's Democracy Commission small grants program funds projects related to human rights. In the past year, efforts have supported youth and student group activities to raise awareness in the field of human rights and to strengthen civil society through training, workshops, and radio programs that reach remote areas of the country. Ongoing projects target two key marginalized communities in Macedonia -- the Roma community and persons with disabilities -- to raise awareness about their rights and examine the challenges facing members of these communities.

[1](#)4. (U) A number of USG-funded projects work to bring government closer to the people and to strengthen links between citizens and elected officials. A phased decentralization process started in 2005, with USAID as the lead international donor in building the capacity of municipalities to provide more effective and responsive service for constituents. In addition, USAID funds numerous projects to strengthen Macedonia's democratic system and institutions through political party development, increased parliamentary accountability, and NGO capacity-building.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY INITIATIVES TO ADVANCE HUMAN RIGHTS

[1](#)5. (U) Post focused recent public diplomacy initiatives on

raising public awareness of trafficking in persons (TIP) issues. A USG-funded nationwide media campaign launched on March 8, International Women's Day, was targeted at empowering young women in the fight against TIP. In the coming year, post will also fund training for local journalists covering TIP cases.

COORDINATION WITH REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

¶6. (U) The U.S. works extensively with the OCSE Rule of Law and Police Development units in Skopje to build a more accountable, effective, and professional police force. Close coordination between the U.S. and OSCE multiplies our effectiveness, particularly in the areas of fighting corruption, professionalization of the police, and capacity building of the judiciary. Recent efforts have focused on professional police training, humanitarian law training for judges and prosecutors, and strengthening agencies engaged in combating organized crime.

EFFORTS TO FOSTER DIALOGUE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY

¶7. (U) Post's efforts this year, in tandem with our EU colleagues, to foster dialogue between the governing coalition and the largest ethnic Albanian opposition party, DUI, were successful in ending DUI's boycott of parliament. As a result, DUI has re-engaged in the democratic process. Ongoing efforts, coordinated with local EU, OSCE, and NATO representatives, encourage all political parties, NGOs, and citizens to engage in consensus building and to strengthen and develop Macedonia's democratic institutions.

GOM DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS PRIORITIES

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¶8. (U) GOM officials regularly speak out to defend the rights of ethnic Macedonians in Bulgaria and Greece. The GOM publicly praised the Government of Albania's recent efforts to recognize and protect the rights of ethnic Macedonians in Albania. The GOM continues to work toward full implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (FWA), which brought the 2001 internal ethnic conflict to an end. The FWA established a set of principles to create a multiethnic democracy that guarantees equal rights for all ethnic communities, a goal to which all major political parties here aspire.

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